

VZCZCXRO9765
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #2021/01 1551040

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 031040Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7214
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 8671
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8032
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3344
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9827
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5570
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4311
RHMFSS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 4012

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 002021

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PK PREL PTER
SUBJECT: NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR DURRANI DISCUSSES FATA
STRATEGY

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. On May 29, Mahmud Ali Durrani, Pakistan's new National Security Advisor (NSA), addressed countries with troops in Afghanistan on Pakistan's strategies for combating terrorism and enforcing peace agreements within the tribal areas. He stressed that it was important not only to himself, but also the Government of Pakistan (GOP), to make clear that Pakistan viewed the ongoing conflict as their war.

Stressing the difficulties of operating in the rugged and inhospitable terrain of the tribal areas, Durrani explained existing constraints on military operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): 1) sensitivity to collateral damage, 2) constitutional protection of tribal traditions and governance, 3) limited counter-terrorism capabilities, and 4) political acceptability of military actions.

¶2. (U) He also "spelled out" Pakistan's strategy in the war on terror - to vigorously pursue the ultimate objective of the extermination of terrorist elements and to deny the use of its territory as a safehaven for militancy within and outside of Pakistan. This strategy would be implemented through a three-pronged approach, using complementary political, military, and developmental engagement. Regarding future peace agreements in troubled areas, Durrani remarked they would be structured to reestablish the writ of government and to deny space for terrorist action thereby creating space for democratic initiatives. Specifically, future agreements must contain clauses requiring elimination of cross-border terrorist movement, expulsion of foreign fighters, closure of extremist training camps, and acceptance of the government's right to take action should tribes fail to enforce the agreements. Durrani closed the meeting by reiterating Pakistan's commitment and resolve. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) On May 29, in a meeting with countries with troops in Afghanistan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister and recent Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S., Mahmud Ali Durrani, outlined Pakistan's strategies for combating terrorism and enforcing peace agreements within tribal areas of the border region. After a brief introduction by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, designed to demonstrate cohesion within the new administration, Durrani briefed the Chiefs of Mission on the Pakistan's military and political strategies in the FATA, as well the substance of current and future peace agreements.

¶4. (U) He began by noting that popular support for liberal political parties in the recent elections was a boost for Pakistan's efforts in the war on terror, citing the

significance of religious parties' low showings in the border regions. Durrani said he wanted to make clear that the GOP believes the war on terror is Pakistan's war.

¶15. (U) Referencing a series of maps of the FATA and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Durrani argued that terrain in the region posed major difficulties in policing not only the region as a whole, but border crossing points in particular. In his words, the rugged, inhospitable terrain and poor infrastructure made it nearly "impossible" to police the border, despite Pakistan's nearly 900 border posts. He added that the historical granting of border-crossing "easement" rights to tribals made policing even more difficult, especially at night. Durrani said that while there were only two officially established routes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, there existed some 20 dirt tracks that could be traversed by wheeled vehicles and approximately 340 routes traveled primarily by foot and pack animal. Describing the challenging terrain as restrictive to the movement of ground troops and logistical supply lines, Durrani claimed that Pakistan's lack of air mobility exacerbated its policing problems. Finally, he noted that refugee camps along the border were an additional concern because they are, in his opinion, breeding grounds and safe havens for militants and narco-traffickers.

¶16. (U) Durrani discussed the current constraints on military operations within the FATA. First, government sensitivity to collateral damage is growing; "sifting the bad guys from the good" is becoming increasingly difficult. Second, the existing status of the tribal areas in Pakistan's

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constitution requires acceptance of their right to traditions and self-governance. Third, Durrani cited Pakistan's limited counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities, claiming that despite the support already received from allies, deficiencies existed and additional training and equipment were needed. He asserted that political reaction to military action, not only within Pakistan but from the outside as well, so imposed a hindrance on Pakistan's ability to curb extremism along the border. He commented that the emergence of liberal parties helped to moderate views and improve Pakistan's ability to engage the tribals through means other than military, but there was still a long way to go.

¶17. (U) Referencing comments made by Prime Minister Gilani, Durrani proclaimed that Pakistan was "virtually fighting for its soul" so as not to "go the way of the Taliban." As such, he spelled out Pakistan's strategy in the war on terror - to vigorously pursue the ultimate objective of the extermination of terrorist elements and to deny the use of its territory as a safe haven for militancy within and outside of Pakistan. This strategy would be implemented through a three-pronged approach, using complementary political, military, and developmental engagement. Showing clear cohesion with Gilani's previous statements, Durrani confirmed that the federal government would grant a greater role to the NWFP government and increased political and economic engagement in the FATA. He made it clear that there would be no compromise or talks with terrorists unless they "lay down their arms," and that current discussions were only being held with tribal leaders and jirga representatives. Durrani reiterated that the army would remain in the FATA but their leadership had been given more discretion to relocate as necessary to facilitate better logistics and control of the region.

Potential Peace Agreements

¶18. (U) He followed his briefing on the government's FATA strategy with a discussion regarding future elements of any potential peace agreements in the FATA. He remarked that the concept was to separate "irreconcilables" and reestablish the writ of government, denying space for terrorist action and creating space for democratic initiatives. He also commented

that agreements would only be signed with tribal leaders to ensure they understand their responsibilities to shoulder enforcement of the agreements. Specific clauses will be required in future peace agreements - including that being implemented in South Waziristan - to effectively combat terrorism while providing opportunities to tribal leaders to regain control and legitimacy within their tribal areas.

¶9. (U) First, all cross-border terrorist movement must cease. Durrani acknowledged that enforcement would be difficult, given the terrain, acceptable trade movements, and the easement rights of tribes, but claimed that this clause was essential to establishing the framework on control. Second, tribes would be responsible for the expulsion of foreign fighters, choosing his words wisely to not cast blame on all foreigners present in the FATA. Third, Durrani stated agreements must require the closure of all extremist training camps. Referencing the failure of 2006 agreements, he admitted that while the agreements themselves were not inferior, implementation and enforcement was. As such, Durrani claimed that a more "sturdy mechanism" would be in place to enforce and monitor these agreements. Finally, any signed agreements must recognize the government's right to take action should tribes fail to enforce the agreements. He confessed that he fully expected violations to occur but said that the central issue was how quickly the government would be able to respond.

¶10. (U) Expecting questions would arise regarding Baitullah Mehsud, Durrani noted that peace agreements with the Mehsud tribes had two distinct features. The first was that the agreements were pursued by the Mehsud tribes themselves as a result of the inconveniences and suffering caused by Baitullah Mehsud's militancy. Second, Durrani argued that the government was signing these agreements from a position of strength, which they hoped to exploit in sparking similar developments elsewhere. Durrani accepted that disagreements

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may exist regarding Pakistan's tactics and methods in prosecuting the war on terror, but reiterated Pakistan's commitment and resolve.

¶11. (U) The French Ambassador asked how, in light of past agreement failures, Pakistan intends to ensure new agreements are fully respected, as well as whether the agreements included any stipulations regarding military presence and/or specific stationing locations. Durrani responded that Pakistan had learned from past experience and thus established more conditions for the enforcement of new agreements. In addition, improved intelligence and forward positioning of troops would enable the government to react more quickly to violations. He acknowledged that success will hinge on proper implementation of the agreements, but that increased political engagement will be the key to "capturing space from terrorists." Likewise, Durrani declared that now was not the right time to decide on long-term positioning of the army and, while locations may be adjusted as situations improve, the military would not be completely removed from the FATA "under any circumstances."

¶12. (U) The Ambassador from Poland followed up by asking whether expulsion of foreign fighters would include Afghans and whether diminished power of the maliks would make their signing of the agreements less potent. Durrani first admitted that distinguishing Afghan Taliban from Pakistani Taliban would be difficult, but contended that efforts would be focused more on foreign fighters, such as Chechens. Regarding the diminished power of the maliks, Durrani acknowledged the concern was valid, claiming that past military operations may have also disrupted the existing political system. He stated the government hoped to bring back the malik system had power and suggested that an increase in government funding would help them improve their position.

¶13. (U) The Norwegian Ambassador raised the lack of security in Afghanistan as a major reason for postponement of refugee camps closures in Pakistan and asked Durrani how the GOP planned to deal with the situation. He answered that while refugees were a problem, the threat posed from a counter-terrorism perspective was real and had to be handled through increased security and intelligence. Durrani urged the group to help improve stability in Afghanistan so that many of the refugees could return home. He did, however, agree that there was no simple solution to the refugee problem but resolved to hold discussions with the Afghan government on the matter.

¶14. (U) The Danish Ambassador asked how the government would effectively monitor compliance with peace accords, pointing to Pakistan's claims that it would not hold talks with terrorists. The Ambassador also questioned whether the Taliban would be included in future jirgas and if Baitullah Mehsud would be party to the South Waziristan peace agreement. Durrani replied that a number of interrelated elements exist to help monitor compliance: 1) improvements in intelligence sharing and cooperation, 2) consistent military presence, 3) alliances with strengthened maliks, and 4) increased control of ingress routes by the military. With respect to Taliban presence at future jirgas, Durrani explained the need to define not simply whether the individuals were Taliban, but whether they were militant, in which case they would not be welcomed. Put simply, he said, the government must accept that fact that the tribal system in place had not changed over the years and if non-militant Taliban leaders held influence with the tribes, it would be difficult to exclude them from the jirgas. On the other hand, Durrani assured the group that Baitullah Mehsud would in no way participate in the jirgas, acknowledging Mehsud's potential influence over tribal leaders who did participate.

¶15. (U) Finally, the Ambassador from Australia inquired on the possibility that Mehsud was transferring fighters across the border to Afghanistan. Although Durrani admitted that he had no evidence of these transfers, he contended that it was likely these moves had occurred. Referring to previous "hard-hitting" operations, Durrani claimed that such operations were responsible for tribal relocations, which he

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believed led to tribal pressure on Mehsud and requests for the peace agreements. Even so, he acknowledged that dramatic progress would not occur overnight and asked the group of diplomats for their countries' patience and trust, granting their uncertainties regarding Pakistan's capabilities, but not its resolve in this long war.

PATTERSON